

Women are the change agents of nations

 By Jessica Tennant

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In celebration of International Women's Day earlier this month, founder of W-Suite, Katie Mohamed hosted a dialogue on the theme of 'Each for Equal', addressing various forms of equality around acceptance, opportunities, access and diversity.

“ The narrative was clear – we all need to accelerate and co-create this culture of leadership that is inclusive and drives meaningful participation of women in creating strong economies and great nations. ”

The initiative was launched a year ago to date. Commenting on its growth, Mohamed said: “A year along and we have created a huge impact moving forward in solidarity, connecting and creating an enabling environment and a platform, exchanging best practices and knowledge.”



Katie Mohamed.

She believes that women are agents of change and that our voices deserve to be heard. “Once we have meaningful conversations, we can then be active and constructive.

“Any little contribution towards driving an equal society, gender equality and creating social and economic impact within our close-knit communities can make us re-evaluate and create change.”

Here, she goes on to tell us more about the initiative and why women economic empowerment and gender equality are top of her to-do-list...

■ **Why did you decide to launch the W-Suite initiative?**

I went to the President's Investment Summit in 2018, our new acting President at that time, gathering all economic stakeholders under one roof to commit towards this 'new dawn'. I looked around the room and this new dawn looked like a patriarchy establishment and the few women leaders were all too familiar, and then you wonder, how can you affect change in any way possible?

■ **Why are you particularly passionate about women economic empowerment and gender equality?**

I have always been an activist and a feminist, firmly believing that in order for us all to thrive and reach our full potential, be confident and make a contribution to society and that the power parity should be both social and economic. For generations, we have witnessed how slow this transformation has been. I strongly believe that as women, we are change agents of nations and society at large.



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■ **What are some of the key issues that have been raised to date?**

We have discussed, raised and addressed various issues, such as sexual harassment in the workplace, under-representation of women in positions of power and influence, and 'pull her down' syndrome.

■ **Why do you believe it's important that men are included in these discussions?**

It is a huge part of creating an inclusive culture towards transformation, having men part of the conversation in order for them to grasp the scale of the problem. And they want to be part of the solution in creating a positive impact.

Men are our allies and it's important for them to action and create significant opportunities for women, as they still have positions of power and influence. We cannot leave our young boys behind. They also need to understand that we are all in this together.

■ **Comment on the current state of women in leadership?**

Women are constrained from achieving the highest leadership positions.

“ Only 5% of Fortune 500 CEOs are women. Wow. In Africa alone we have only 5% of women CEOs. ”

■ **What change do you hope to see?**

How can we use collaborative resilience planning for a strong female economy and promote mentorship and entrepreneurship as well?

■ **What steps need to be taken in order to achieve this?**

Women need significant opportunities for senior positions and to be incentivised accordingly. The pay parity is a huge factor here.



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■ **What does it mean to 'lead like women'?**

Taking the lead and making the shift starts with re-imagining the vocabulary of power, leadership and opportunities.

■ **What advice would you give to aspiring women working hard to get a seat at the table?**

Be constantly motivated and choose to be around people that are passionate. Stay away from the noise. Connect and

network with people that nourish your soul, are authentic and help pursue your dreams and goals. We should all be advocates of driving this agenda for us and our future generations.

The greater inclusion of women in the economy could be the elixir to reduce unemployment, poverty and inequality. As women, we should design our own life and write our own story.

The W-Suite golf day and masterclasses have been postponed and the Summit is set to take place during Global Entrepreneurship Week in November. To stay up-to-date, follow Mohamed on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#), and W-Suite on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [Instagram](#).

ABOUT JESSICA TENNANT

Jess is Senior Editor: Marketing & Media at Bizcommunity.com. She is also a contributing writer. marketingnews@bizcommunity.com

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